

**Siuslaw News**  
P.O. Box 10  
Florence, OR 97439

# Opinion

**The First Amendment**  
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." —Thomas Jefferson (1800)

## Politics should have no place in our local government

**(Editor's Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)**

My first Fourth of July in Florence was 1995. Over the years, the event has grown by way of more participation — musical venues, food vendors — all culminating into a fireworks display over the river celebrating our small community, our freedom and independence as a country.

All of this, of course, was *pre* COVID-19.

This past Fourth of July, I received a series of phone calls from constituents who were very concerned, alarmed, confused, fearful and angry about a group of people that had set up various presentations in Old Town's Gazebo Park. But before I address that, I'd need to pull back and say that, for all my years in Florence, most of us live, work and socialize together — and knowing what the other's political stripes are never mattered. What mattered most was what is best for the community.

That changed during our local 2018 elections. At that point, partisanship became a colossal disruption in our ability to govern or set policies that are representative of the entire community. Instead, a 3-2 mandate had been established through which far-right ideals are governing by proxy — which does not represent all of our constituents.

My hope has been that the upcoming 2020 election would help us return to true non-partisanship.

Apparently, I am mistaken.

Our local government has always been non-partisan and much healthier for it, with the top priority being what is best for the community as a whole rather than individual political stripes. In 2018, Mayor Joe Henry, Geraldine Lucio and Woody Woodbury openly aligned themselves and were supported by members of our far-right community — outspoken pro-Trump supporters on social media and through "Patriot Place," of which Sherry Harvey was president. Coincidentally, she was also the applicant who coordinated the July 4th activities I mentioned earlier.

We public figures have to look at what we say and do from all sides,

and choose what brings people together, brings positive change and supports our community as a whole — regardless of personal political beliefs or alliances.

**GUEST VIEWPOINT**  
**By Joshua Greene**  
Florence

Our opportunities for economic stability, community improvements in education, jobs, marketing our tourism, updating local building codes, investments into infrastructure and partnering with entities that will help the city reach its goals — including grants and funding sources — are all dependent on the vision and non-partisanship of the Mayor and City Council members.

Speaking in one unified voice is the strongest position in order to enact policy change and attracts partners.

I think we can all admit that, during the past six months of 2020, our country has sailed into uncharted waters stressed by challenges of Black Lives Matter, a COVID-19 virus out of control, displays of political maneuvering from all levels of federal government that range from misleading statements and "facts," to outright corruption as partisanship agendas ripple through our nation's leadership.

This is not who we are as a country, nor is it who we are as a small community.

In the middle of Bay Street over the July 4th weekend, Sherry Harvey reserved the Old Town Park location immediately after *last* year's Fourth of July. There were three tables set up this year: One to support Dick Anderson, the current mayor of Lincoln City, who is running for the District 5 seat that runs from Tillamook to Coos Bay (what does that have to do with Florence or Lane County?).

The second table was to register to vote, sign a petition to recall Governor Brown and support "Second Amendment Sanctuaries," which is a gun lobby agenda item that, so far, has passed resolutions in 270 counties nationally as the NRA attempts to add laws that will end common sense gun reform items like background checks.

The third table was the most out of place: a pro-life booth of four tables covered with anti-abortion signs, posters planted in the lawn of Gazebo Park, and painted plaster molds illustrating the sizes of a fetus at different stages of gestation.

With all due respect to this very complex issue, it cannot be simplified down to only pro or against abortion.

So why on Bay Street on July 4?

Is this how we welcome visitors, support local businesses and attempt to keep our local economy going?

As a member of local government, we dropped the ball by allowing Sherry Harvey and her group to present themselves in the heart of our Old Town Historic District with far-right political agendas and a misplaced pro-life theme. As a council, we need to introduce new policies when it comes to staking claim on city property solely for political purposes.

It's worth noting that none of the participants at the July 4th event practiced social distancing and few were wearing masks. This created a dangerous opportunity for spreading the virus within our community as they came into contact with visitors from well beyond the city, county and state.

You don't need a permit to protest on a street corner, but you do for city property.

There's a reason for that.

In hindsight, I would have expected this permit to have been withdrawn based on COVID-19 alone and our responsibility as a city to follow the recommended health guidelines in avoiding large gatherings. If nothing else, we need to ask ourselves what impression do we want to make on travelers — and especially families — who come to our community to enjoy time together and away from politics.

To survive and thrive economically as a community, we need to ask ourselves some hard questions about the level of political partisanship that has taken hold of our decision making at all local levels.

And just as importantly, we need to be *honest with ourselves and each other* in answering those questions.

[To clarify, these are my personal points of view and *not* that of the City Council on which I serve.]

## LETTERS

### SLOW DOWN ON THE SIUSLAW

It's recreational boating season again with salmon season soon to follow. I think I can speak for several riverfront homeowners when I say, we would appreciate it if boaters would slow down when going by private docks.

It won't take that much longer to get to where you are headed.

While there is no regulation that states that you have to, some common courtesy would be appreciated.

I am aware of several docks that have sustained damage from boats going by too fast and too close.

Please keep in mind that you are responsible for the damage you cause to private property.

Slow down a bit, enjoy the beautiful Siuslaw River and we will all get along.

—Mitch Sloan  
Florence

### MASKS ARE NOT THE ANSWER

My issue is with the COVID-19 panic, much of which I see being fueled by ignorant national, state and local government leaders.

They don't really have a clue

as to limiting the exposure to the virus. Masks are *not* the answer and, in many ways, give people a false feeling of security.

According to test results I have read, depending on the type of mask worn, they can be as little as 55 effective — with bandanas being the least effective.

After 40 years of being an Infection Control Officer in the United States Navy, United States Marine Corps and the civilian world, I can tell you that the only truly effective mask is the M5 gas mask.

Viruses are 50 percent heavier than bacteria, which means they can generally travel up to six feet when someone coughs or sneezes. Bacteria, such as the common cold, can travel 20 to 30 feet. So unless you are having a heated argument with someone, your risk of exposure to the virus is pretty minimal.

Your chances of developing cancer are many times greater than acquiring the virus from shared, non-porous surfaces such as shopping carts.

Wake up America. Stop supporting mask manufacturers and taking what the CDC is

feeding to the media and public. The CDC is one of the most overfunded organizations in the country.

I know, I dealt with their delays and incorrect findings for 40 years.

—Jay Straley, Florence  
Retired Medical Laboratory  
Scientist

### A DOUBLE THANK YOU IS DUE

First, a thank you to Lois Worley for expressing her thoughts on the Opinion page twice ("What Is Happening To Our Nation," July 3; "United We Stand, United We Fall," July 11), which reflect the thoughts of the Americans I know who love this country.

Sadly, it is evident not all Americans do love our country — and many of the rest of us are getting the opinion that enough is enough of recent happenings.

Secondly, thank you *Siuslaw News* for printing her opinion. You probably get many Letters to the Editor and, with limited space, have to choose which to print.

So, we thank you for choosing to print her very thought-provoking and accurate message.

—Tony Cavarno  
Florence

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Jenna Bartlett  
Ned Hickson  
Susan Gutierrez  
Cathy Dietz  
Ron Annis

Publisher, ext. 318  
Editor, ext. 313  
Multimedia Sales Director, ext. 326  
Office Supervisor, ext. 312  
Production Supervisor

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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are un-sourced or documented will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside the Siuslaw News readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

### POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) Explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

Email letters to:

[nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com](mailto:nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com)

## WHERE TO WRITE

**PRES. DONALD TRUMP**  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500  
Comments: 202-456-1111  
Switchboard: 202-456-1414  
FAX: 202-456-2461  
TTY/TDD Comments: 202-456-6213  
[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

**OREGON GOV. KATE BROWN**  
160 State Capitol  
900 Court St.  
Salem, Ore. 97301-4047  
Governor's Citizens' Rep.  
Message Line: 503-378-4582  
[www.oregon.gov/gov](http://www.oregon.gov/gov)

**U.S. SEN. RON WYDEN**  
221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510  
202-224-5244  
541-431-0229  
[www.wyden.senate.gov](http://www.wyden.senate.gov)

**U.S. SEN. JEFF MERKLEY**  
313 Hart Senate Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510  
202-224-3753  
FAX: 202-228-3997  
541-465-6750  
[www.merkley.senate.gov](http://www.merkley.senate.gov)

**U.S. REP. PETER DEFazio**  
(4TH DIST.)  
2134 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515  
541-269-2609  
541-465-6732  
[www.defazio.house.gov](http://www.defazio.house.gov)

**STATE SEN. ARNIE ROBLAN**  
(DIST. 5)  
900 Court St. NE - S-417  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-986-1705  
FAX: 503-986-1080  
Email: [Sen.ArnieRoblan@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Sen.ArnieRoblan@oregonlegislature.gov)

**STATE REP. CADDY MCKEOWN**  
(DIST. 9)  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-986-1409  
Email: [rep.caddymckeown@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:rep.caddymckeown@oregonlegislature.gov)

**WEST LANE COUNTY COMMISSIONER JAY BOZIEVICH**  
125 E. Eighth St.  
Eugene, OR 97401  
541-682-4203  
FAX: 541-682-4616  
Email: [Jay.Bozievich@co.lane.or.us](mailto:Jay.Bozievich@co.lane.or.us)